

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 CU-04

NIC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HEW-08 RSR-01 /099 W  
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R 242131 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4123

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 1771

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, MILI, SCUL

SUBJ: PRATS, THE MILITARY, AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

1. SUMMARY. MILITARY AND CHURCH OPPOSITION TO GOVT' S  
EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROPOSAL ( ENU) HAS PRECIPITATED AT LEAST  
TEMPORARY SHELVEING OF PROJECT ALTHOUGH PUBLIC OUTCRY AGAINST  
IT CONTINUES. ENU INCIDENT FOCUSED PUBLIC  
ATTENTION ON MILITARY OPPOSITION TO AN IMPORTANT ALLENDE GOVT  
PROPOSAL. UP LEADERS MAY NOW BE WONDERING IF MILITARY WILL  
BE TEMPTED TO OPPOSE OTHER GOVT POLICIES. ARMY CINC  
GEN PRATS' PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY WITHIN MILITARY MAY HAVE  
BEEN DAMAGED, AND HIS EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH  
FRICTION- FREE ARMED FORCES/ GOVT COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL HAVE  
BEEN SET BACK. END SUMMARY.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOVT' S NATIONAL UNIFIED SCHOOL ( ENU)  
PROPOSAL IN MID- MARCH BROUGHT STORM OF PUBLIC PROTEST, THREATS  
OF NATIONWIDE STUDENT STRIKE, AND OPPOSITION FROM CATHOLIC  
CHURCH ( SANTIAGO 1633). CARDINAL SILVA CALLED ON PRES ALLENDE  
MARCH 27 TO INFORM HIM OF CHURCH' S OBJECTIONS TO ENU, AND  
SOME COMMENTATORS CLAIMED ENU CONTAINED SEEDS OF INCIPIENT  
CHURCH/ STATE CONFLICT. CHILEAN BISHOPS ACTING COLLECTIVELY  
ISSUED FORMAL STATEMENT APRIL 11 OPPOSING ENU.

3. ONE OF MORE TELLING ARGUMENTS ADVANCED AGAINST ENU,  
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FIRST SURFACED BY PDC SENATOR CARMONA, WAS THAT EVENTUAL RECRUITS FOR ARMED FORCES WOULD BE INDOCTRINATED MARXISTS. COMMANDERS OF THREE MILITARY SERVICES CALLED ON ALLENDE EVENING APRIL 10 IN CLOSED DOOR SESSION TO EXPRESS THEIR RESERVATIONS ABOUT ENU, AND ALLENDE REPORTEDLY AGREED TO ARRANGE BRIEFING NEXT DAY BY MINED JORGE TAPIA FOR SENIOR- AND MIDDLE- LEVEL OFFICERS IN SANTIAGO AREA. ALLENDE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT OFFICERS, PARTICIPATING AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT IN UNIFORM, WERE TAKING ACTIVE ROLE IN OPPOSING ENU IN MYRIAD DEBATES CONDUCTED AT LOCAL SCHOOL PTA LEVEL.

4. TAPIA BRIEFED SOME 200 OFFICERS APRIL 11 AND BY ALL ACCOUNTS DID NOT ACQUIT HIMSELF WELL. DURING QUESTION PERIOD FOLLOWING HIS PRESENTATION, SOME HALF DOZEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE SERVICES LED BY FORMER MINPUBLIC WORKS ADM ISMAEL HUERTA RAISED SEARCHING QUESTIONS AS TO DESIRABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF ENU. PRESENTATION OF MILITARY OFFICERS WAS OBVIOUSLY COORDINATED AND CAREFULLY RESEARCHED; MAN OF POINTS THEY MADE INCLUDING HUERTA PRESENTATION SUBSEQUENTLY LEAKED INTO PRESS.

5. ALLENDE WAS REPORTEDLY OUTRAGED AT WHAT HE REGARDED AS INAPPROPRIATE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN CIVILIAN POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND REPORTEDLY ORDERED GEN PRATS TO CONDUCT ANOTHER MEETING WITH OFFICERS TO EXPLAIN THEIR " PROPER" ROLE. MINDEFENSE JOSE TOHA ISSUED STATEMENT NOTING GOVT HAD ENCOURAGED OFFICERS TO EXPRESS ANY " DOUBT, RESERVATION, OR OPINION" ON ENU AND RESULTING COMMENTS DID NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL POSITION OF ARMED FORCES. RUMORS BEGAN TO CIRCULATE THAT ADM HUERTA AND POSSIBLY OTHERS WOULD BE FORCED INTO RETIREMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR APRIL 11 PRESENTATIONS. NAVY COMMANDER ADM RAUL MONTERO SHARPLY AND PUBLICLY DENIED HUERTA WOULD BE FORCED INTO RETIREMENT. COINCIDENTALLY, IN A LETTER TO CARDINAL SILVA, TAPIA ANNOUNCED THAT IMPLEMENTATION DATE FOR ENU WOULD BE POSTPONED. SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS FROM EDUCATION MINISTRY PROMISED " FULL NATIONAL DEBATE" AND PASSAGE OF A LAW BY CONGRESS, BOTH MAJOR OPPOSITION DEMANDS, BEFORE ENU WOULD BE PUT INTO EFFECT. STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND PUBLIC OUTCRY CONTINUED IN SANTIAGO AND ELSEWHERE, HOWEVER .

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6. PRATS HELD CLOSED- DOOR SESSION WITH SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS APRIL 13 IN WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY DEFENDED ALLENDE GOVT'S RIGHT TO IMPLEMENT BASIC ASPECTS OF PLATFORM ON WHICH IT WAS ELECTED. HE REPORTEDLY DEFENDED ENU AND CITED MILITARY DUTY TO OBEY CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES AND TO REFRAIN FROM " DELIBERATIVE" ACTIONS - I. E. INTERVENTION IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS. AT LEAST SOME OF OFFICERS PRESENT WERE REPORTEDLY DEEPLY

UPSET OVER PRATS' PRESENTATION, AND SOME CAME AWAY WITH FEELING THAT HE HAD BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN APOLOGIST FOR ALLENDE GOVT.

7. DURING TESTY ENCOUNTER APRIL 16 WITH REPORTER FOR OPPOSITION LA SEGUNDA, ALLENDE ADMITTED HERTA'S RETIREMENT PAPERS HAD BEEN ON HIS DESK "FOR TWO MONTHS" BUT THAT HE HAD NOT YET ACTED ON THEM. ENCOUNTER DREW SUBSEQUENT SHARPLY WORDED PUBLIC LETTER FROM ALLENDE TO LA SEGUNDA AND ITS PARENT EL MERCURIO. ALSO ON APRIL 17, ARMY GENERALS BEGAN WHAT WAS BILLED AS ANNUAL MEETING TO STUDY "ROUTINE" ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS; ARMY PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE SPECIFICALLY DENIED MEETING HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH POSSIBLE FORCED RETIREMENTS. QUERIED BY REPORTERS, PRATS ALSO DENIED ANY FORCED RETIREMENTS WERE IN PROSPECT.

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 CU-04

NIC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HEW-08 RSR-01 /099 W  
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R 242131 Z APR 73  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4124

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 1771

8. APRIL 18, MINDEFENSE TOHA ISSUED ANOTHER STATEMENT DENOUNCING "FALSE AND ALARMIST CAMPAIGN" IN OPPOSITION MEDIA TO "DESTROY DISCIPLINE IN ARMED FORCES, TO INCITE THEIR MEMBERS TO DELIBERATIVE ROLE, . . . AND TO UNDERMINE AUTHORITY OF SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS." STATEMENT STRONGLY DEFENDED PRATS BY NAME, BOTH AS ARMY CINC AND AS FORMER CABINET MINISTER, AND PROMISED "THE MOST DRASTIC PENALTIES" FOR THOSE WHO INSTIGATE AND EXECUTE THIS CAMPAIGN. ANOTHER ARMY PRESS RELEASE AGAIN STRESSED ROUTINENESS OF ARMY GENERALS' MEETING BUT GAVE NO HINT OF SUBJECT MATTER DISCUSSED.

9. PRATS CONDUCTED HOUR- LONG CLOSED- DOOR MEETING APRIL 23 WITH SOME 1,500 SENIOR ARMY NON- COMMISSIONED OFFICERS. INFORMATION ON SUBJECTS DISCUSSED DURING MEETING. ALSO

ATTENDED BY OTHER RANKING ARMY GENERALS, HAS NOT YET  
BECOME AVAILABLE.

10. MEANWHILE, OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES AND SECONDARY  
STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUED TO KEEP ENU ISSUE ALIVE  
AS RALLYING POINT. SEN JULIO DURAN'S DEMOCRATIC RADICAL  
PARTY (PDR) ISSUED STATEMENT APRIL 20 PROCLAIMING "BATTLE  
IS NOT YET OVER," AND STUDENTS ANNOUNCED SERIES OF DAY-LONG  
STUDENT "STRIKES" IN VARIOUS PROVINCES FOR THIS WEEK.

11. COMMENT. IT IS PROBLEMATIC AS TO WHETHER  
CHURCH OR MILITARY OPPOSITION TO ENU WAS THE MORE RESPONSIBLE  
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FOR SHELIVING PROJECT, BUT BOTH WERE CLEARLY INVOLVED ON AN  
INSTITUTIONAL BASIS. ARMED FORCES AS AN INSTITUTION HAVE IN EFFECT  
"DELIBERATED" BEFORE, RANGING FROM 1969 "TACNAZO" THROUGH  
DECISION LAST NOVEMBER TO PARTICIPATE IN ALLENDE'S CABINET.  
THEIR ROLE IN ENU AFFAIR, HOWEVER, IS SEVERAL DEGREES  
MORE PUBLIC AND HAS WHETTED PUBLIC INTEREST SINCE  
UPSHOT WAS MILITARY OPPOSITION TO AN ALLENDE GOVT PRO-  
POSAL. UP MAY NOW BE WONDERING WHETHER MILITARY WILL  
OPPOSE OTHER GOVT POLICIES. ONE UP SOURCE  
RECENTLY TOLD US HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT URUGUAYAN-STYLE  
"CREEPING MILITARISM."

12. PRATS' PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY WITHIN MILITARY RANKS  
MAY HAVE SUFFERED SOME DAMAGE. PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFI-  
CANTLY, HIS EFFORTS TO SET UP A FRICTION-FREE ARMED FORCES/  
GOVT CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION HAVE BEEN SET BACK.  
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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

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